

MINUTES
SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
BJ's Restaurant
990 N Center Street
Gaylord, Michigan
September 27, 2005

Chairman Manson called the meeting of the Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) to order at 10:52 a.m., Tuesday, September 27, 2005 in Gaylord, Michigan.

Members Present:

Bill Manson, Region III, Michigan Snowmobile Association, Grand Rapids
James Duke, Region I, Michigan Snowmobile Association, Munising
Bill Lucas, Region II, Michigan Snowmobile Association, Cadillac
Lee Murray, At-Large, Hopkins
Jack Nelson, Business Community, Greenville
Orville Olson, Representative at Large, Ludington

Members Absent:

Elza Inman, Grant Sponsors, Brethern

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Nick Schmelter, USDA, Huron-Manistee National Forest
Anne Okonek, USDA, Ottawa National Forest
Randy Charles, USDA, Ottawa National Forest
Sheriff Terry L. Johnson, Antrim County Sheriff Department

Staff Present:

Christie Bayus, Grants Management, Lansing
Richard Kennedy, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management (FMFM), Lansing
Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, FMFM, Lansing
Steve Kubisiak, Recreation and Trails Program Coordinator, FMFM, Lansing
Steve DeBrabander, State Trails Unit Manager
Ron Yesney, FMFM, Western UP
Don Klingler, FMFM, Gaylord
Joe Soncrainte, FMFM, Atlanta
Martin Osantowski, FMFM, Onaway
Capt. Curt Bacon, Law Enforcement, Marquette
Dan Moore, FMFM, Newberry
Bill O'Neill, FMFM, Gaylord

The Snowmobile Advisory Committee, the Department of Natural Resources (Department) staff and the audience introduced themselves. **Mr. Manson** welcomed everyone.

MINUTES

The minutes of the August 9, 2005 Snowmobile Advisory Committee Meeting was acknowledged.

Motion by Mr. Lucas to adopt the minutes of the August 9, 2005 meeting, seconded by Mr. Duke. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Sponsor Maintenance Cost – **Mr. Olson** reported that as a result of the workgroup he developed eight new forms that he proposes to be filled out by the grant sponsors to track grooming and maintenance expenditures. He said he would like to make the forms available to all sponsors, and they may be ready for this season's program. He said he has requested input from the workgroup and the Department.

Mr. Kennedy highlighted the Department's comments and noted there are a few redundancies.

Mr. Lucas said the reason for repeated information is that some of the sheets will be filled out by the maintenance person, and others filled out by the field contact.

Mr. Kennedy clarified that the proposed forms would be filled out by the clubs on a voluntary basis, and they are not a form required by the Department. Discussion continued.

Mr. Manson said he will collect the information from Mr. Olson and work independently with the clubs to collect the additional information on a voluntary basis.

Mr. Manson requested Mr. Kennedy e-mail the revised Department forms to the SAC. **Mr. Kennedy** noted all the forms are available to the clubs on the Department website.

Mr. Radabaugh said the Department will start reviewing potential form changes for next season.

NEW BUSINESS

Insurance - **Mr. Manson** tabled this agenda item and requested it be placed on the next meeting agenda. The issue to be discussed is how claims by additional insureds are handled.

Trail Proposal Process/Alpena Trail – **Mr. Manson** reviewed the trail proposal process and noted that in some unusual circumstances clubs may have up-front costs that are necessary in order to obtain landowner permission for a trail. He expressed concern that if the trail proposal is not approved by the Department the club would be out the money that was necessary to obtain landowner permission. He cited a current situation with the Alpena Snowmobile Association. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Radabaugh recommended the club obtain a letter of intent from the landowner including estimated up-front costs. Department would review this information as part of the trail proposal review process. **Mr. Manson** requested this information also be reviewed by the SAC.

A motion was made by Mr. Lucas that the Committee concur with covering pre-paid costs, that they be reimbursed upon approval by the Department, even if the trail is not approved. The motion was revised by Mr. Murray to read as follows:

The SAC recognizes that there are occasional unusual up-front expenses in the process of trail procurement. In the event that a grant sponsor incurs such an expense, after they have first advised their field contact person in writing of the nature of the expense and forwarded a copy of the letter to the Program Director and to the Chairman of the SAC, then the SAC wants and expects that the legitimate expense be reimbursed to the grant sponsor regardless if the trail is ultimately approved or not.

The SAC also recognizes that the necessary language changes be made to the Grant Agreement to reflect the above.

Motion was made by Mr. Lucas that these agreements will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, seconded by Mr. Nelson.

**Manson – Aye
Duke – Aye
Murray – Aye
Olson – Aye
Lucas – Aye
Nelson – Aye**

The Alpena Snowmobile Association's grant will include the cost of necessary attorney fees to develop the lease to secure landowner permission for the proposed trail.

Motorized Trail Safety Criteria Workgroup – Mr. Steve DeBrabander, Unit Manager, State Trails Operation and Construction Unit, introduced himself and explained his role within the unit. He reported a workgroup has been established to develop a process and a criteria to evaluate the need for Director's Orders on motorized trails. The workgroup is made up of internal Department staff, U.S. Forest Service, Sheriff Johnson and the chairs of the SAC and ORV trail advisory boards. The workgroup has met once and will be meeting again later today.

Mr. Olson mentioned their Emergency Response Program and the need for consistency on Federal and State lands with regard to emergency signage.

Mr. Radabaugh said the workgroup will not be addressing signage. Counties need to make their own systems for signs.

Mr. Manson asked who should be contacted to get everyone uniform between counties.

Mr. Lucas asked if they should go to their County Commissioners.

Mr. Schmelter, USDA, Huron-Manistee National Forest and **Mr. Charles, USDA, Ottawa National Forest** both agreed that a uniform system would be good.

Sheriff Johnson, Antrim County Sheriff said he could assist with coming up with some type of uniformity.

Mr. Manson requested **Mr. Lucas** and **Mr. Olsen** to come up with a plan for the December meeting.

STAFF REPORTS

Fiscal Year 2005-06 Snowmobile Grant Status Report – Mr. Kennedy distributed a list of 2005-06 grants. He noted the initial grant outlay was increased from last year due to the increased grooming rate, utility payments, increased bidding threshold, and increase in requested lease payments. Approximately \$5.6 million is budgeted to date. This cost does not include equipment, additional grooming, unforeseen special maintenance, or pending trail proposal development costs.

Mr. Manson noted the \$4 million supplemental appropriation approved last fiscal year is available for supplemental grooming, equipment and acquisition of permanent trails.

Ms. Bayus reported there are still six clubs with incomplete files. Mr. Manson will follow-up with the clubs. It is anticipated that Clubs with complete files will have their grant recommendations submitted to the State Administrative Board for approval on October 4, 2005.

Mr. Lucas asked if all the maintenance requests have been funded. **Mr. Kennedy** advised only a few were cut-back.

Mr. Manson updated the Committee on Mr. Inman's condition. He added that if the Benzie club needs help the SAC is willing to assist. **Ms. Bayus** said she is in contact with the club almost on a daily basis and offered assistance as well.

Mr. Kennedy reported dates and times for October pre-season meetings with the sponsors will be forthcoming. **Mr. Lucas** requested that the SAC be advised of the dates as soon as they are available.

Mr. Manson thanked Mr. Kennedy.

Gaylord to Cheboygan Update – Mr. Radabaugh reported that the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) requested the Department to come back to them in December with estimated costs for the east route. He noted the Department is working with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to explore the potential for a snowmobile route along the M-27 corridor.

Mr. O'Neill said the Department is seeking a change to the existing Director's Order allowing snowmobiling from under I-75 to Grandview Beach Road. The gate under I-75 will be opened to accommodate this. The extent to which this segment will be groomed is under discussion but it is very unlikely it will be groomed by the snowmobile program, in fact a proposal to groom this segment was denied. Discussions continue regarding grooming options, i.e. Green Diamond Trail.

Yuma to Copemish Trail Update -- Mr. Radabaugh advised there is no update yet on the Yuma-Copemish trail. He has not heard back from MDOT. Cadillac Winter Promotions does have a lease with MDOT for trail from Cadillac west to Mesick; continuing west is in lease negotiation between DNR and MDOT and there are bridge structure/footing issues at the Manistee River that would prevent trail use this coming season. **Mr. Manson** requested Mr. Radabaugh follow-up with MDOT and advise him on the status of the lease.

Recreation Specialists – Mr. Ron Yesney, FMFM, Western UP updated the Committee on several projects, and included a handout of those updates. **Mr. Manson** asked about the funding for Military Hill Bridge. **Mr. Yesney** advised that the Forest Service needs to approve it first. **Mr. Charles** added that this won't be happening for at least two years. Discussion continued on categorical exclusions and federal scoping requirements.

Mr. Manson referenced a handout from Todd Neiss, WLP Recreation Specialist. **Mr. Kubisiak** noted the need for periodic and systematic structural reviews of bridges on the motorized trails system. Some of the bridges noted in Mr. Neiss's report are either currently under engineering review or have been included in FMFM's ORV grant request. **Mr. Kubisiak** noted because these are multi-use the Department will be looking at cost sharing construction once the engineering reviews are complete.

Forest Service – Mr. Randy Charles, USDA, Ottawa National Forest reported that International Paper is selling off all of its land across the Upper Peninsula. He is hopeful that snowmobilers will still have the same access to designated trails on these lands. The Forest Service authorizes the Department to work with grant sponsors on Forest Service lands through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). He noted the current MOU is expired and that it is important for the Forest Service and the Department to work together to develop a new MOU.

Mr. Nick Schmelter, USDA, Huron-Manistee National Forest reported that Ms. Carol Boll will be the new recreation representative for the Huron-Manistee National Forest. He reported they are working on several snowmobile trail re-routes in his district.

Ms. Anne Okonek, USDA, Ottawa National Forest – thanked the U.P. Snophylers for their efforts to fill in the gap on trail #2.

Law Enforcement – **Capt. Curt Bacon** reported that Law Enforcement Division has purchased a few new snowmobiles, but depending on budget cuts, not sure if there will be any more purchased.

Sheriff Terry Johnson reported that a snowmobile enforcement training class will be held for deputies December 5-9, 2005 at Camp Grayling. The class is 40 hours, is county sponsored and currently has 20 participants signed up.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Mr. Tom Gallagher, St. Helen Snowpackers, Heart of North Snow Council directed a concern to Capt. Bacon about sign damage, and asked if Conservation Officers (C.O.'s) had ever caught anyone destroying signs. **Capt. Bacon** responded that he was aware of one area which had three or four map boards destroyed. He encouraged clubs to contact their local C.O. and they will work with the sponsors if there are problems.

Mr. John Hauk, Presque Isle Sno-Trails asked about a re-route in the Black Mountain area. There are four proposals in process that are waiting for Division Chief approval. **Mr. Radabaugh** will follow-up.

Mr. Hauk asked if the Department is going to print snowmobile trail maps. **Mr. Radabaugh** advised that maps have been worked on, but color printing has been restricted as another part of budget cuts. **Mr. Manson** asked if legislation was needed. Discussion continued.

Mr. Hauk questioned the 2005 Snowmobile Equipment list and if there is any effort to re-assign equipment offers that a club did not take. **Mr. Kennedy** said that there have been two re-assignment offers of equipment. Equipment earmarked for Les Cheneaux was questioned. **Mr. Kennedy** said he has not received notice from Les Cheneaux that they are not taking the equipment and would wait for their communication.

Mr. Martin Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Association asked if the forms on the Department website are set up to allow data to be entered on-line. **Ms. Bayus** said that they are on-line, but not in template format to fill on-line yet. **Mr. Cottle** requested paper handouts of the materials that will be presented to the sponsors at the pre-season meetings. He asked about lease payments to UP landowners and how they will be handled. Cancelled checks and invoices from the landowner should be provided by the sponsor to the Department to document expenditures. He reported a landowner is threatening to pull his easement. **Mr. Dan Moore** said he will look into the issue.

Mr. Norm Theil, Trail Riders Snowmobile Club inquired on the status of the 56th Street trail proposal. **Mr. Kennedy** said he is waiting on signatures and will advise Mr. Theil as soon as that happens.

Mr. Larry Marzean, Alpena Snowmobile Association raised a question about sign sizes and why they are the same as last year.

NEXT MEETING

The next SAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 8, 2005 at 9:00 a.m., Best Western, M-28 East, Wetmore, Michigan.

The meeting adjourned at 2:22 p.m.

Public Present:

Martin Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Association/EUP Snowmobile Council
Norm Theil, Trail Riders Snowmobile Club
Bob Eller, Alpena Snowmobile Association
Larry J. Marzean, Alpena Snowmobile Association
Dave Chevalier, Lewiston Fun Ones
Jim Barber, Jordan Valley Trails Council
Bradley Potter, Weston Michigan Snowmobile Council
Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Tom Gallagher, St. Helen Snowpackers, Heart of the North Snowmobile Council
David Becker, St. Helen Snowpackers, Heart of the North Snowmobile Council
Bud Longroy, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club/St. Helen Snowpackers
Rich Filley, Grayling Snowmobile Association
Rollan Rieger, Presque Isle Sno-Trails
R. John Houk, Presque Isle Sno-Trails and NE Michigan Snowmobile Council
